

## **Mastery-Based Learning FAQ**

### **1. What is mastery-based learning?**

Mastery Based Learning (MBL) focuses on students learning the important skills, concepts and standards that are essential for them to be successful. Students go through learning activities and are given feedback on these activities so they can improve their understanding and work toward mastery of the concept, skill or standard.

### **2. Do students get grades?**

Grades will still be given, but at the interim and end of the quarter, and will be holistically determined based on the level of mastery the students demonstrate on the standards for the quarter. Students will obtain a level of understanding of each concept, skill or standard (Mastery, Skilled +, Skilled, Proficient, Developing, Not Attempted/Unsuccessfully Attempted). Based on their level, students will be assigned a holistic grade at the end of the quarter. GPA will be calculated off the grade students receive for each course, just as they have in the past. Grades will be broken down as follows: Mastery - A; Skilled + - A, Skilled - B; Proficient - C, Developing - D. Not Attempted or Unsuccessfully Attempted is when they would receive a failing grade for the class.

### **3. How can a parent know how their child is doing in class?**

At the beginning of each quarter, you will mostly see “Not Started or Just Beginning” for each standard in progress book. All standards to be covered will be listed in progress book each quarter. As a student progresses through the quarter, and increases their understanding, their level in progress book should change from beginning to developing, proficient, skilled or mastery. We expect each student to work towards and reach skilled, while mastery indicates the student has excelled in that area. If a student has “Not Attempted or Unsuccessfully Attempted” in progress book then they are **choosing** to not make progress, and this is cause for concern. If you see “Not Attempted or Unsuccessfully Attempted” in progress book it is important to speak with their teacher to talk about their progress.

### **4. Will learning activities count toward the student’s holistic grade?**

Learning activities are to give students practice and it is expected that mistakes happen. This is part of the learning process and does not impact student grades. Students complete the learning activities and then show their level of learning on the assessment for the standards covered. The students level of progress is based on the assessments, not the learning activities. Learning activities are posted for parents in progress book or in schoology to show if they are completing the activities, not to determine level of understanding.

### **5. If the focus is on the learning of the concepts, skills and standards, and not grading, why give grades?**

Grades still need to be given in high school for multiple reasons. The main reasons are to meet eligibility requirements for high school sports, obtain a GPA for college entrance and provide a standardized scale for obtaining scholarships.

## **6. What was wrong with the traditional system of giving grades for each assignment?**

The traditional system focused on getting a grade for each assignment, even if the student was practicing. Students then moved on to the next assignment. There is a final assessment and then students move on to the next topic. MBL focuses on practicing and getting feedback to prepare the student for the assessment that will show what they have learned. Students then have the opportunity to do additional learning activities to improve their level of understanding and retake the assessments. Mastery Based Learning is similar to a sport. You practice and obtain feedback and then continue to practice to get ready for the game. The same applies to learning in class with the MBL system. Ultimately, this is challenging students to learn at a high level, not just make it difficult and move on. Students are in charge of their learning using the MBL system.

## **7. Why only do a certain number of standards each quarter?**

The mastery-based learning system focuses on a certain number of standards for each quarter. This varies slightly by each subject, but there is a focus on what is most important. To make sure students have the time to master the standards, skills or concepts teachers focus on learning activities around the most important standards. This gives students the time to complete learning activities, the teacher to assess their level of understanding and then students to improve on the areas they did not master through the feedback provided. The standards are done by quarter because a grade needs to be provided each quarter for athletic eligibility.

## **8. How will mastery-based learning benefit my child?**

A MBL environment is a more individualized approach than a traditional model. Teachers and parents see areas where students are struggling and can provide the timely feedback and support needed to address learning gaps and keep students moving forward. This approach allows students to move through the course material at their own pace. Teachers conference with students on their performance and how to improve.

## **9. Will mastery-based learning be a disadvantage for high achieving students?**

No. Education systems that use MBL focus on the individual student. As a result, students progress at their own pace. Those who are able to master given material more quickly advance right away instead of waiting for others to catch up—giving them a chance to move even further along than in traditional systems.

## **10. Why change to a mastery-based learning system? This is not how we were taught in school.**

Everything in our world has changed since our childhood, except for the way we educate our students. Technology has advanced rapidly, our economy has become increasingly global, and the jobs of tomorrow require a much higher set of skills. With an MBL environment, students benefit with an increased choice in their learning.

## **11. Why is the mastery-based learning method the right approach?**

A MBL approach focuses on making sure that students demonstrate proficiency in critical knowledge and skills, rather than moving on to new competencies before they are ready. This approach focuses on the individual student. That means that high-achieving students are not held back, and others are not forced on before they are ready.

**12. Will students taking College Credit Plus (CCP) classes use the mastery-based learning system?**

Students that are enrolled in CCP courses must follow the guidelines of the college for the class, so they use the traditional grading method.